



Ernie Fletcher
Governor

Mark David Goss
Chairman

Teresa J. Hill, Secretary
Environmental and Public
Protection Cabinet

Commonwealth of Kentucky
Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet
Public Service Commission

John W. Clay
Commissioner

Timothy J. LeDonne
Commissioner
Department of Public Protection

211 Sower Blvd.
P.O. Box 615
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602-0615
Telephone: (502) 564-3940
Fax: (502) 564-3460

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:
Andrew Melnykovich
502-564-3940, ext. 208
502-330-5981 (cell)

PSC HONORED FOR EFFORTS TO PROTECT UNDERGROUND LINES
Agency receives “Partner in Safety” award from Kentucky 811

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 12, 2007) – The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) has been honored for its efforts to reduce accidents involving buried utility lines and to raise public awareness of 811 as the new number to call before beginning any excavation.

Kentucky 811 (formerly Kentucky Underground Protection, Inc.), which operates Kentucky’s call-before-you-dig center, honored the PSC with a “Partner in Safety” award at its recent statewide conference.

“The PSC, especially through its statewide campaign of radio public service announcements, has been instrumental in the very successful rollout of 811 across Kentucky,” said Dan Meiners, executive director of Kentucky 811. “We’re familiarizing the public with the new number and we are seeing more utilities signing up for the service.”

The Federal Communications Commission has designated 811 as the national number to call to have underground utility lines marked prior to excavation. Until now, most states have used 10-digit toll-free numbers unique to each state.

Kentucky 811 is a consortium of utility companies, local governments and others with an interest in preventing damage to buried utility lines. All of the major utility companies in Kentucky, along with many smaller companies and municipal utilities, are members of Kentucky 811. There is no membership fee.

The PSC works closely with Kentucky 811 and regularly investigates accidents or outages caused by someone digging into a buried utility line.

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“The call-before-you-dig program is an excellent example of what can be accomplished when government and the private sector work together to address a problem,” PSC Chairman Mark David Goss said. “Commissioner John Clay and I are very pleased that Kentucky 811 has honored the hard work of the PSC staff involved in this effort.”

Radio spots about the 811 number began airing in April and will continue through September. The PSC is spending \$65,000 to air the radio announcements. In addition, the PSC has received a \$35,000 grant from the federal Office of Pipeline Safety to work with Kentucky 811 to promote the call-before-you-dig program.

Kentucky 811 is undertaking additional outreach efforts, as is the Common Ground Alliance, the national organization that promotes effective damage prevention practices for underground utility lines.

Goss noted that state law requires that, in most cases, anyone using mechanized equipment for excavation must first call and request the marking of any buried utility facilities. However, owners of underground lines are not required to provide information on their location to the 811 call center, so a call to the 811 center may not yield information about every buried line in the area, he said.

That is why the PSC is urging any owner of underground facilities that is not a member of Kentucky 811 to join immediately, Goss said. With no fee to join, the only cost is the nominal charge for each request to locate buried lines, he said.

More information on Kentucky 811 is available at www.kentucky811.com.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Department of Public Protection in the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in the commonwealth of Kentucky and has approximately 110 employees.